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An Essay

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by

William W. Wilkins,

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On Amenorrhoea or absence of the menses.

This disease is placed by Dr. Cullen, under the class
Locality, and under, Epistaxis. He has also divided it into three
species, 1st *Emanatio menstrualis*, where the menses do not appear
at their usual period. 2nd *Suffusio menstrualis*, when after
the menses have appeared, but from some other cause
than pregnancy, they have ceased. 3rd *Amenorrhoea diffi-*
cultus, or ~~hæmorrhagia difficultus~~, when the flow is in too ✓
small a quantity, and attended with pain.

In this department, I shall treat, only of the two first,
that is, Retention, and Suppuration.

There are three different states, in which the uterus does
not take on its specific action, when the patient has ex-
isted at the proper age.

1st When there is no development, either of the uterus or
the parts which closely sympathize with it, at the pe-
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the intestinal fluid. In this case there should be no interference, unless the general health of the patient was affected. But if the friends of the patient should still urge, that something ought to be done; and it is found that by a noncompliance, they would apply to some person less scrupulous about giving violent medicines, which might prove dangerous. In that case, it may be advisable to impersonate, by giving bread pills colored with Rheubarb, and by that means, give nature an opportunity of fulfilling her office.

2. When the development is too slow. In this condition, the system is forced in two different states. None, the patient is subject to flatulencies of the bowels, insensibly fatigued, complaints of sickness at the stomach, con梧g pain in the head, back, limbs &c. When these symptoms are present, the lancet and the other aperients to remove are to be employed, until the system is reduced to the proper standard. After the phlegm action has abated, and the menses should not appear, I would then use the

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slight preparations, so as gently to stimulate the stomach, by its close sympathy with the rectum. If these should fail you producing the desired effect, I would resort to some of the more powerfull Enemonegogues, as the senna, senna &c.
See How to give &c.

In the other state of the septicæ, the condition is the reverse of the last. It has been called Chlorosis, by some authors, and Leucophærosis, and Crænæsis, by others. Some of the following symptoms, almost always, characterize this disease. It begins with an unpleasant smell of the breath, some concrements, loss of appetite, a feeling of debility, and weariness, desire to active employment, and a desire for indigestible substances as bread, pieces of plaster, &c; to these succeed, a pale, sallow, or greenish complexion, a pain of the head, and loins, palpitation of the heart, dyspnoea, hurried respiration from slight causes, syncope, symptoms of hepaticæ, a sense of suffocation, and lastly, swelling of the abdomen, and edema of the lower extremitiæ.

These symptoms have frequently been erroneously attributed

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to the above of the muscles. Many ignorant, and inexperienced persons, acting on this supposition, have given stimulating and heating medicines, as emmenagogues with the greatest injury to the health of their patients.

Various are the theories, which have been brought to account for the appearance of chlorosis, about the period, at which the menstrual discharge usually makes its appearance. Dr. Cullen has ascribed it, to a certain state of the womb, and to a defective communication of a due stimulus from the genital organs, on which the tone, and tension of the whole system depend. There is no doubt that it sometimes arises from these causes; how could we otherwise account for the fact, that the flow has been suspended by the act of coition. Although this may sometimes be the case, yet I think, it is very rarely, owing to these causes; but, almost always to a disordered state of the obstopic apparatus, and consequent congestion of the bowels.

As I am indebted to Dr. Hamilton, for this view of the subject, I shall take the liberty of copying some of his

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principal arguments in its favour. In his valuable work on purgative medicines, he says, "the slightest attention to the history of the disease, ^{that arises in} comes, presents, and accompanies the other symptoms. Casterinep induces the livid colour of the breath, disordered stomach, depraved appetite, and impeded digestion. These preclude a sufficient supply of nourish-
ment at a period of growth, when it is most wanted; hence paleness, languor, flexibility, the various symptoms, wasting of the muscular strength, languor, debility, the retention of the mucus, the suspension of the other excretions, severe effusions, impot, and death. He likewise says, "that the feeble and delicate of both sexes are subject to chlorosis. Therefore the action must be the strongest and not the antient of castorinep. The reason that females are more subject to chlorosis, is that they are more liable to habitual constipation, both from the greater capacity of their pelvis, and habits of life.

I will commence the treatment of this case, with an enema of
Yeast, and Tartar, (if not contra-indicated,) to be followed by a
purg. Having evacuated the obnoxious stool, which is to be done

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is almost all this disease I would purge the patient daily, or every other day with the bark and roots. If there was great debility, I would prefer a emulsion of Roots and sulphate of iron, or some other preparation of iron. According to all along I would recommend to the patient to wear flannel next to the skin, and to take regular exercise, especially on horseback. When it could be procured the warm salt water bath followed by frictions with the flesh brush, or flannel, would be found useful. I think that frictions with fine dry sand would answer a very good purpose in this case. I have been led to this conclusion by the fact, that frictions of this kind have the property of stimulating the skin to a due performance of its functions, and from the close sympathy, that is known to exist between the skin, and ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~intestines~~ ^{the} ~~cavities~~ ^{the} ~~body~~ ^{the} cavities, I should infer that I would by this means, be likewise stimulated to a healthy action. If these were should fail, and there should appear to be a disposition in the intestines to perform its secretory action, and the system was in a proper state, I would give some of the milder emmenagogues, sparingly to stimulate it. Of these, I should prefer the milder or [✓] as it is the least irritating, and in my experience, I have found it

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very effectual in achieving suppuration; I am however but to believe it is very well adapted to this form of the disease.

Symptoms of Phthisis pulmonalis, as frequent fits, night sweats, great emaciation, with cough, and pains about the chest, frequent by accompanying this disease. The treatment under these circumstances is to give an emetic, apply a blister to the chest, and fumigate the hands open. Tonics have sometimes proved useful, as Mysore wine of 3 grs. &c. This diet should be light, and nourishing, if the cough should be too violent some tea-sallet or some other expectorant should be used. All the aperient means before mentioned, should however be employed. If they should fail, a removal to a warmer climate by a sea voyage would be admirable.

Chlorotic patients are frequently affected with a species of haematuria. This is to be treated with purgatives, and the other usual incusions.

The 3^d division of scrofulosis, which I have adopted is, when the disease is fully developed, but it does not take on its proper action in consequence of Leprosy, or some other disease, when it is caused by leprosy, the Tonsil of Cervicalnodes will often

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remove this affection, and thus the uterus be brought into a condition to resume its healthy function. But of any other disease be present, we would first cure this last by its appropriate remedies; then we might treat the retention, as before directed us.

I proceed to the consideration of the second species of Amenorrhœa, that is, Supposition of the menses. This occurs mostly in an interruption of the discharge, often it has been established, but from some other cause than pregnancy. For the sake of perspicuity, and convenience, I shall make two divisions of the disease, as to the time at which the supposition takes place, whether, during the flow, or between the periods of its usual appearance.

A' Supposition that takes place during the flow is almost always caused by the application of cold, or violent affections of the mind. In this case, the symptoms are very severe, as great pain in the head, and back, with spasms of the stomach, and intestines, violent hysterical affections with most of the symptoms of fever. The indications are, to reduce febrile excitement, and calm irritation.

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They may be fulfilled by the use of the laurel, simecum, with large doses of laudanum, combined with opium, or the salve tulip. If the stomach is too weak to retain the laudanum, I would use an oil opium pill, or give it before the action. When the bowels are constipated, I would give an emetic to be followed by a purgative. I would prefer a combination of rhubarb and aloes, for reasons formerly mentioned. Subsidiary to that, I would apply fermentations of laurel wine to the abdomen, and seal the mustard bath to the feet.

2^o. Supposition of the disease between the presents.

This may take place either, in a phthisic, or debilitated state of the system. It is occasioned by all the causes which prevent it doing its duty, to which may be added consumption, habitual cold feet, and an inflammation of the substance of the uterus itself. The symptoms of the phthisic state are, a full, round, frequent pulse, hot skin, pain in the head, back, and loins. This case is to be treated like any other inflammatory affection, by blisters, purging, and the rest of the ordinary practitioner's regimen. After the system is reduced to its healthy

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standard, we are to return to the use of the emmenagogue, medicines
of the application of which, I shall treat more fully, after
I have considered the other state of the system. In a late
publication on the diseases of women accompanied by discharges,
by Dr. Clarke, I find, that he ascribes^s theorrhœa to a chronic
inflammation of the substance of the uterus. I think, that is
a very correct view of it in some cases, for we find that if
there is a too great flow of blood to any gland of the body, that
gland ceases to perform its functions. Therefore, as it is admitted
that the uterus is a gland, and the menses a secretion, we must
conclude from analogy, that if this viscus be in a state of
inflammation, its secretion must be stopped. For, although
the general system does not show any inflammatory symp-
toms, yet there are reasons to suppose, that they exist.

In post mortem examinations, we frequently find appearances
of a chronic inflammatory action, that has existed, although
there were no symptoms that would have led us to this
conclusion, during the life of the patient. This is more or
less the case, with almost every organ of the body, especially

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the uterus. From these considerations, I am led to believe, that in most cases of this disease, remedies addressed to the general system will be found to succeed much more frequently than the plan that is generally pursued; that of giving stimulating emmenagogues on all occasions, without any regard to the condition of the system. To this, may also be ascribed the uncertainty of emmenagogues, of which practitioners so frequently complain. It is then misapplication, and not to the inefficacy of the remedies, that we must look for their failures.

I shall next treat of this disease, when we have symptoms of debility. We generally find the patient complaining of languor, sickness at the stomach, an occasion to suppose of any kind palpitation of the heart, on ascending a height, and most of the symptoms of dyspepsia. On examining the patient we find a weak脉搏, the skin often discolored, and for ~~whatever~~ we can not distinguish it from pregnancy. I anxiety ~~has~~ been brought forward to distinguish this disease from pregnancy, but there is not any one diagnostic symptom. — Therefore it is recommended, to form an opinion from the

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position of the patient, and by taking into consideration all the signs which characterize a state of pregnancy. After having determined, that she is not pregnant, we generally begin our treatment, by examining thoroughly the alimentary canal, our next iminations one to renew the state of abstinence, and the symptoms of dyspepsia, which accompany it. This is to be done by the application of all those remedies, that are found to be useful in that disease, and by poultices applied to the alimentary canal. Together with these ~~remedies~~, I would purge almost daily with the preparations of Aloes with those of Senna, or with Rheubarb. I would use at the same time, all the auxiliary means mentioned under the treatment of Chlamosis. If these should fail, I would next resort to some of those medicines, that are thought to act more directly on the uterus. It has been disputed, whether any medicine is act specifically on that organ. This is against I shall not attempt to determine, for even if I could solve the question, it would be of no practical utility. It is sufficient for me to know, that they act on it in some

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way; whether it is through the general system, or specifically, I shall have to trace, whose opportunities and movements render them more capable of its solution.

The first medicine of this kind, that I shall notice, is the Archis Gentianae; or Stoddard's. This substance has had a various reputation, as, an emmenagogue. It was first noticed by Thome, who thought very highly of it, but in his opinion as to the properties of medicine, totally rejected it. The late Dr. Bunting, used the root of it, and he thought it the best emmenagogue, he had ever used.

Dr. Denss also, bears testimony to its efficacy, both in respite, and abortion, when judiciously administered.

To satisfy myself of the efficacy of this remedy, I tried it in four cases of sterility, of pretty long standing, in four of which I succeeded, by giving this medicine in doses of half a drachm several times daily, about the time that the menses were expected. The polygala sanguinea, has been very highly recommended by Dr. Hartliborne of this city, and it is very highly spoken of by an worthy professor of practice

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than whom, there can be no higher authority. —
He also recommends the *Succinum sabinae* or Savine,
very highly. In the case in which the Madober
failed, I succeeded completely, with the oil of
Savine continued for some time.

A favourite remedy of Dr. Dimes is, the volatile Tincture
of Guaiacum. When he has administered it, he says,
he has never found it to fail. I have not used it
myself, but from the high authority by which
it is recommended, I have no doubt of its efficacy,
when properly administered.

Dr. Physick speaks very highly of the *Hilliomas*
Myers. A great many other medicines have had
their advocates as unmerititous, and no doubt they
have sometimes proved successful, when properly
used. True, as in other classes of medicine, there has
been a fashion in the choice of unmerititous, and
first one is at the head, then another, according
as they happen to be popular with judgment.

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In this disease the state of the septum is to be attended to, as much as in any other whatever, and in proportion, as one practicable there coincides with or due consideration to this circumstance, so well known would it be. If practitioners would act on this principle, I think we should hear much less complaint of this uncertainty for the future.

Richard Willis

of Liverpool

et

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